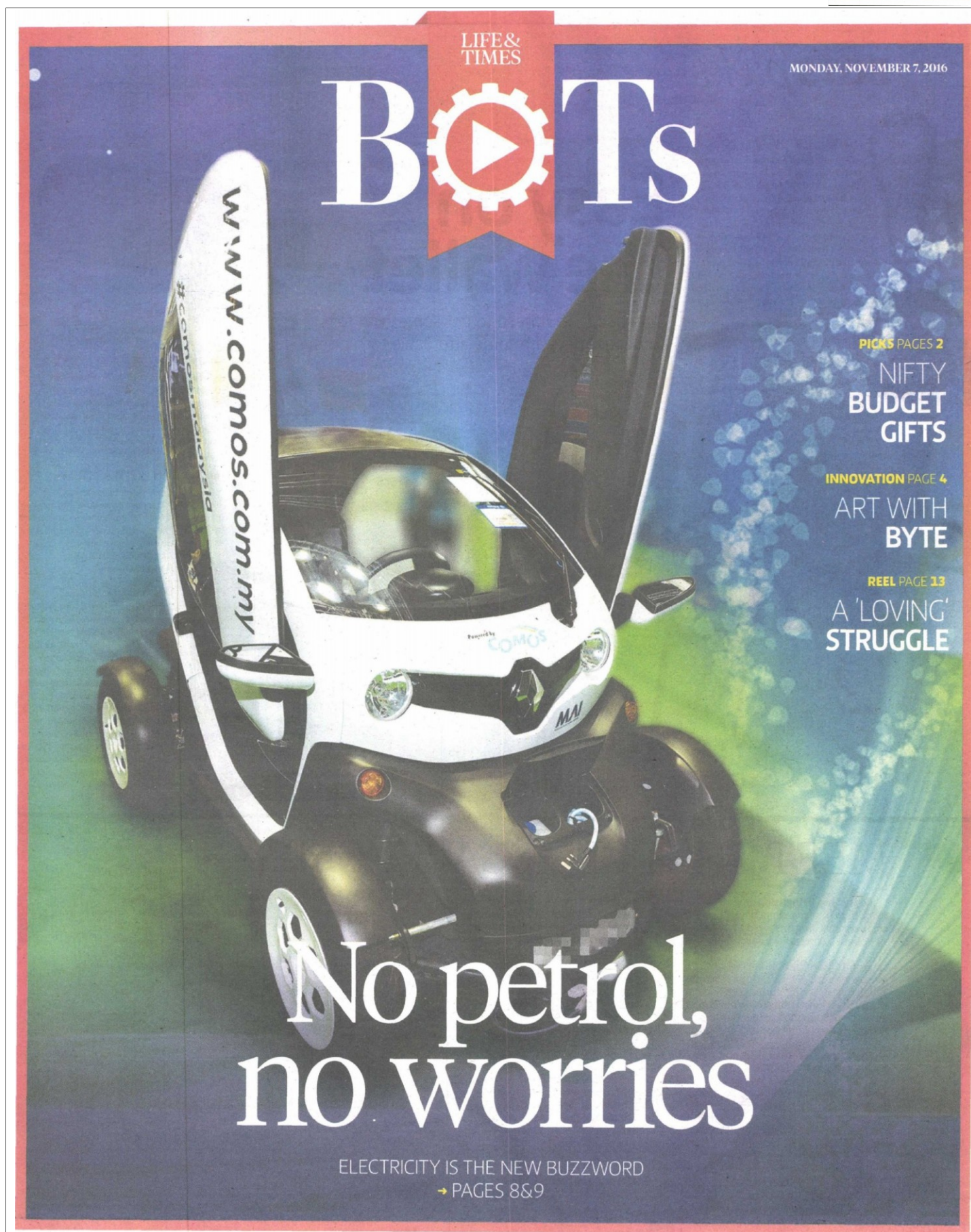


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ELECTRIC RIDES

Smarter, green commutes coming our way, writes **Izwan Ismail**

IMAGINE this. You wake up in the morning, check the app on your smartphone to see if your electric car in the porch is fully charged. On a full charge, it can go about 200km, enough to take you to your office and back for the day with plenty of kilometres to spare. With the electric car, you won't have to worry about rising cost of fuel anymore. In fact, you will contribute to reducing carbon monoxide (CO2) emissions and a more eco-friendly environment. While this situation may be a bit too

advanced for most Malaysians, the future of green and energy efficient transportation is already here, and a few local companies are pursuing this effort.

At the recent International GreenTech and Eco Products Exhibition and Conference Malaysia (IGECM) in Kuala Lumpur, companies like Comos, Elektro, Bas Inovasi Malaysia (BIM) and Volttron showed what they had in the shelf for the average Malaysians. In terms of eco-friendly transportation.

Meanwhile, carmakers like BMW, Tesla, Mercedes, Nissan and Renault showcased

their energy efficient vehicles.

START WITH SHARING

Fully electric car usage is still in its infancy stage here but efforts are being made to let Malaysians experience them here.

For companies like Comos, one of the best ways to encourage the public to use electric cars is through car sharing rental of its electric vehicles.

Comos has started EVV sharing initiatives in Kuala Lumpur and nearby attractions across the country.

Its chief technical officer, Fadriil Ahmad Shuhri, says it has a fleet of cars and motorcycles available for urban commuters to move between the MRT stations and office buildings, hotels and shopping complexes.

The initiative will encourage the people to use public transport as it enables them to move easily around the city. This is an effort to reduce the number of private cars entering the city by at least 7,000 vehicles. This will mean less traffic congestion and it can reduce CO2 emissions by 74 per cent.

The company is also offering a service called EcoRide, where tourists and locals can rent Renault Twizy electric cars at bases in Putrajaya, Langkawi, Malacca, Kuala Lumpur and Iskandar Malaysia.

GREEN BIKES

Meanwhile, up north in the state of Kelah, local company Volttron is producing foldable electric bicycles.

Its managing director, Tan You Soon, says these are electric pedal-assisted bicycles (EPAB), designed as an alternative to petrol-powered motorcycles.

It has a little pedalling from the rider to start the battery motor to power the bicycle that can go as fast as 25 km/h. It's simple and runs on a powerful rechargeable battery that can take riders for distances of 40-60km on just a 3.5-hour charge," says Tan.

"Since the bicycle is foldable, it can be easily placed inside the car boot and taken anywhere for a ride to other places," he says.

Volttron spent three years on research and development before producing the electric pedal-assisted bicycle. It is working with several local universities to provide the bicycles for students in the campus.

"We are in partnership with six local universities under the Jilid Elektrik Rakyat (Malaysia) (SERM), a government-funded programme to promote green mobility among the younger generation," he says.

The universities are Universiti Tenaga Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Universiti Cheras Malaysia, Universiti Malaysia Sabah and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Each will receive 50 EPABs that the students can rent.

The Volttron bikes are also available for the public. They are priced from RM3,000 for the foldable version and up to RM6,000 for the mountain bikes.

ELECTRIC PUBLIC BUS

There may soon be a new, energy efficient bus fleet on our roads with a locally-made electric bus called EBM.

According to a spokesman from Sync R&D, the company pursuing this effort, the first model prototype is ready and awaiting vehicle type approval (VTA) by the government.

He says a bus using electric energy costs 60 per cent less for the same distance, offsetting the initial cost of an electric bus with significantly lower operational costs and energy efficiency.

The EBM bus batteries can last up to five years before they need to be replaced. The batteries can also be recycled, retaining 70 per cent of their original capacity.

The bus body is built using a monocoque fibreglass frame. This means the body is built by assembling layers upon layers of glass, which makes the bus lighter and rust-free. It also helps the body absorb impact better, making the bus safer and safer in the event of an accident.

NO-TECH CARS

Meanwhile, carmakers such as BMW, Mercedes, Nissan and Tesla have showcased their current offering in the energy efficient vehicle segment.

BMW unveiled its new plug-in hybrid sportscar, which has a fuel efficiency of 2.1 L/100 km.

The fully electric Tesla model S is also on display together with Nissan Leaf and Renault Zoe.

The Tesla S cars are brought in under a special programme by the government, as part of the effort to promote energy-efficient, eco-friendly electric vehicles.

Charging station for electric vehicles.

A Renault Zoe being charged.

The BMW iX.

Fadriil Ahmad, Shuhri with the Renault Twizy.

“Since the bicycle is foldable, it can be easily placed inside the car boot and taken anywhere for a ride to other places.”

Yan You Soon

From left: The EBM bus costs 60 per cent less to operate for the same distance. The Volttron electric bicycle. The Tesla Model S at the charging station.